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Procter & Gamble to Reduce Toxic Contaminant in Herbal Essences Shampoo

New product tests reveal 1,4-dioxane in major laundry detergents brands too

ANAHEIM, CA – Today, at a press conference held adjacent to the Natural Products Expo West, the Green Patriot Working Group (GPWG), led by environmental health consumer advocate David Steinman, and the Organic Consumers Association (OCA), a watchdog group with over 850,000 members, announced that Procter and Gamble (P&G) and Steinman have reached an agreement in principle that P&G will reformulate its top-selling Herbal Essences brand to reduce levels of the carcinogenic contaminant 1,4-dioxane. The press conference also announced new 1,4-dioxane test results for twenty laundry detergents, of which notably some of the most popular mainstream brands—including Dial, Church & Dwight Co. and Procter & Gamble—had the highest levels overall.

Steinman presented a letter from counsel for P&G stating they will reformulate 18 products in P&G's Herbal Essences line (which had tested as high as 24 parts per million) to reduce levels to or below 10 parts per million. P&G promised to complete the reformulation for 17 products before July 1, 2010 and for one product by the end of January 2011. The OCA, CSC and GPWG—all groups who have worked to increase awareness of 1,4-dioxane in consumer products—consider it a major step forward that industry giant P&G is positively addressing the problem of cumulative exposure to 1,4-dioxane from a variety of personal care and household cleaning products.

P&G's promise of reformulation follows Steinman's notices of intent to file a lawsuit against P&G in June, 2009 and December, 2009 regarding several P&G products. Similar lawsuits were filed against other manufacturers by the California Attorney General's office in June 2008 for problematic levels of 1,4-dioxane found in other consumer products as established by California's Proposition 65. The letter from P&G's counsel states that, "[P&G] believes that each of its products, including each Herbal Essences branded product, complies fully with California's regulatory scheme."

Steinman and Ronnie Cummins, director of the OCA, also announced new laundry detergent test results from Steinman's continuing study (begun in 2007) that has tested over 160 consumer products for 1,4-dioxane, which is a contaminant and therefore not listed on product labels. In 2009, Steinman tested twenty laundry detergents, including major "natural" and conventional brands. Steinman, who formerly represented the public interest on a committee at the National Academy of Sciences, talked about the problems of wastewater and groundwater contamination with 1,4-dioxane, when it comes from products such as laundry detergents.

continued

Laundry Detergent Test Results

CONVENTIONAL BRANDS:

Tide (P&G) – 55 ppm
Ivory Snow Gentle (P&G) – 31 ppm
Tide Free (P&G) – 29 ppm
Purex (Dial Corp) – 25 ppm
Gain 2X Ultra (P&G) – 21 ppm
Cheer BrightClean Detergent (P&G) – 20 ppm
Era 2X Ultra (P&G) – 14 ppm
Arm & Hammer (Church & Dwight Co.) – 5.0 ppm
Wisk 2X Ultra (Sun Products Corp) – 3.9 ppm
Woolite complete detergent (Reckitt Benckiser) – 1.3 ppm
All Laundry Detergent (Unilever) – 0.6 ppm
Dreft powdered detergent (P&G) - ND
Sun Burst (Sun Products Corp.) – ND

“NATURAL” BRANDS:

Planet Ultra Liquid Laundry detergent – 6.1 ppm
Mrs. Meyers Laundry detergent – 1.5 ppm
Clorox Green Works Natural Laundry detergent- ND
ECOS Laundry Detergent (Earth Friendly Products) – ND
Life Tree Laundry Liquid – ND
Method Squeaky Green Laundry Detergent - ND
Seventh Generation Free & Clear laundry detergent– ND

ppm = parts per million; ND=not detected

The independent third-party laboratory, Exova, known for rigorous testing and chain-of-custody protocols, performed all testing. The press conference was held in cooperation with **The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics** (CSC), a national coalition of health and environmental groups.

About 1,4-Dioxane

1,4-dioxane is generated as a byproduct of ethoxylation, a process used by some companies to provide mildness to harsh cleaning ingredients, which requires use of the cancer-causing petrochemical ethylene oxide. 1,4-dioxane is considered a chemical “known to the State of California to cause cancer” under Proposition 65, and is also suspected as a kidney toxicant, neurotoxicant and respiratory toxicant, among others, according to the California EPA. For more information, please visit www.1-4dioxane.com.

Further Resources

History of Study, Definition and Scientific References: www.1-4dioxane.com

Campaign for Safe Cosmetics: <http://safecosmetics.org/article.php?id=620>

Environmental Working Group: www.ewg.org/chemindex/chemicals/23481

OCA/Myths and Facts about 1,4-dioxane: www.organicconsumers.org/bodycare/DioxaneFactso80314.pdf

Lawsuits from the CA Attorney General's office: www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_12797.cfm

Clean Water Action: www.cleanwateraction.org/currents/summer2009/how-safe-your-bath-tub

Safe Laundry website: www.safelaundryguide.com

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